

Congressman Steve King today made the following statement after voting against an expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), known as HAWK-i in Iowa. The expansion provides new benefits to illegal immigrants and wealthy families at the expense of low-income children. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pushed the bill through Congress by skipping the normal committee process, allowing Americans virtually no opportunity to improve the legislation. The bill waters down citizenship verification requirements by allowing applicants to obtain benefits only by attesting to a Social Security number, making easier for illegal aliens to get taxpayer-funded health benefits. The Congressional Budget Office estimates this change will cost taxpayers \$8.9 billion over ten years. The bill will be funded by a 61-cent-per-pack increase on smokers.

"This misguided bill is a victory for illegal immigrants and wealthy families, but a defeat for needy children," King said. "Speaker Pelosi used budget gimmicks and debate suppression to ram a bill through the House that gives illegal immigrants and wealthy families taxpayer-funded handouts. Taxpayer dollars designated for children's health care welfare should go to children in need, not illegal aliens or families with high income levels."

Background:

- The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) calls tobacco taxes "the most regressive of the federal taxes," meaning that the vast majority of any increases will be on the backs of low-income American families, the very folks intended to benefit from SCHIP. According to the Heritage Foundation, "Around half of smokers are in families earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line (FPL), so increasing the tobacco tax would burden the families in the income class that SCHIP and Medicaid are trying to help." Heritage Foundation research reveals the increase in tobacco taxes requires nine million new people to take up smoking in order for SCHIP to be fully funded:

<http://www.heritage.org/research/healthcare/wm1548.cfm>.

- According to the Wall Street Journal, "the bill is expected to lift a provision in place for more than a decade that bars legal immigrant children and pregnant women from federal health programs during their first five years in the U.S." Overturning this law undoes one of the key aspects of the popular 1996 welfare reform legislation that contributed greatly to reducing dependency and saving taxpayer dollars.